



Colorado Department
of Public Health
and Environment

*“To protect and improve
the health and environment
of the people of Colorado.”*

NEWS

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State Nutrition Program Offers Meal Preparation Tips for Stretching Food and Dollars

DENVER--The Child and Adult Care Food Program at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment Tuesday offered families meal planning and preparation tips for eating healthier in a tough economy.

“A tight budget doesn’t mean families have to eliminate nutritious, tasty meals in their households,” said Janet Bodnar, nutrition consultant with the program. “Eating foods like eggs and beans more often can save money.”

If a family of four substituted any kind of beans, which are high in protein, iron and fiber, for higher-priced meats once a week, Bodnar said, they could save at least \$200 per year.

“Beans cost about 25 cents per serving. Fruits and vegetables also are economical when purchased in season, costing less per pound than potato chips, cookies and other high-fat, sugared and salted snack foods.

“The best way to save money and eat healthier is to plan ahead; prepare simple, but tasty meals; and then eat them at home,” she said.

Bodnar provided the following tips for cost-effective, quick, healthy eating:

- Start by thinking about the types of food the family likes, and plan a menu around these food items.
- Purchase meats and poultry to prepare more than one meal and freeze portions.
- If hamburgers are a favorite, form ground meat into individual patties, then season and freeze them for future use instead of stopping at a fast-food restaurant.
- Cook ground meat in advance and freeze, defrosting what you need to later add to spaghetti sauce, chili or soups.
- Visit the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Web site and search recipes by cost, menu item or age at <http://recipefinder.nal.usda.gov/>.
- Add beans, cheese or meat to corn or whole wheat tortillas to make quick tacos, burritos or wraps at home. Add lettuce, tomatoes, jalapenos and onions for a value meal.
- Choose whole wheat tortillas, pasta and bread instead of the same items made from white flour, for higher nutritional value.

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- Roast a chicken and cut it up for future stir-fry meals, soups or other favorite dishes. Rice, including brown rice, is a nutritious side dish.
- Microwave potatoes, including sweet potatoes, for a quick side dish. Potatoes store well and can be served with fresh, frozen or canned vegetables and leftover meat or poultry.

Bodnar also encouraged families to shop less often by planning food for a week or more and making a shopping list before going to the store.

“Grocery stores know that every time you enter the store, you are likely to buy something that is not planned. Sticking to your shopping list will prevent impulse buying,” she said.

These tips and more cost-saving, nutritious information are available by contacting Bodnar at the Child and Adult Care Food Care Program at 303-692-2330.

About the Child and Adult Care Food Program

The Child and Adult Care Food Program provides nutritious meals and snacks to participating child-care centers, adult day-care centers, homeless and domestic violence shelters and after-school snack programs for at-risk students.

The program reimburses providers across Colorado for serving healthy meals, based on the income of the children’s families. Eligibility for higher rates of meal reimbursement, at free and reduced rates, is based on specific income levels.

For household income eligibility requirements, contact the program at 303-692-2330.